

VZCZCXRO3651
PP RUEHIK
DE RUEHFR #1456 3021523
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 291523Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7438
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

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SUBJECT: French on Doha, Geographical Indications and Convention on Biological Diversity: No Surprises

Ref: SecState 104985

¶1. (U) The French provided a predictable response to reftel demarche on Geographical Indications and the Convention on Biodiversity. GOF officials noted that geographical indications were a political priority for France and should be part of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) package. Comment: The current domestic climate on agriculture is volatile: protesting farmers recently forced a 1.65 (\$2 billion) assistance package from the government and the GOF is unlikely to make any visible "concessions" on agriculture in international negotiations.

¶2. (SBU) Georg Riekeles, Diplomatic Advisor to French Agriculture Minister Le Maire, told AgMincouns that an agreement on GIs would make the current unbalanced agricultural deal more politically palatable in France, while obtaining patent disclosure measures would sweeten the deal for G20 countries. Riekeles cited agreement on this position at the highest EU levels, including Commission President Barroso, French President Sarkozy, German Chancellor Merkel, and Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi, as well as other EU heads of state. Riekeles understands that the United States will not negotiate on GIs, and understands that any Doha deal must pass Congress. In an October meeting in Washington, Representative Colin Peterson reportedly refused to discuss the possibility of a Doha Agreement with Minister Le Maire.

¶3. (SBU) Elie Beauroy, Director for agricultural trade at the Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Employment, agreed that progress on GIs remains a political imperative. He told econoffs that the EU will stick to the July 2008 Commission proposal presented in Geneva that links an extension of GIs beyond wine and spirits, a legally binding register, and patent disclosure measures for genetic resources and traditional knowledge. But Beauroy held a slightly less stark view of the U.S. position, claiming that just as a compromise was reached on non-hormone beef imports, a "technical solution" could have been found "on the spot" for GIs had the Ministers wanted to resolve it. Beauroy said he was surprised that the USG is raising the GI/CBD issue now, since the U.S. did not cite GIs as a fatal flaw when it raised objections to the text at the WTO Ministerial in July 2008. Beauroy said the timing of the demarche on GIs seems political, and that he and his colleagues were wondering whether the new U.S. administration was hoping to restart Doha negotiations from scratch, perhaps because it does not want to take new political risks while grappling with health care reform and other priorities. Beauroy and his colleagues expressed frustration that the U.S. has not explained what it wants, e.g., in terms of market access, and only engages to say what it will not accept.

Allegro